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Published in *Language and Education*, 2018

doi 10.1080/09500782.2018.1438469

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Submitted 23 September 2017; accepted 2 February 2018.

Language ideologies and epistemic exclusion

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Abstract

Research in educational linguistics is now challenging the efficacy of monolingual approaches that often dominate educational practices in multilingual settings. In most African nations where multilingualism is the norm, there remains a persistent reluctance by educational stakeholders (principals, teachers, parents, and students) to embrace multilingualism in education or to reposition local languages as resources in classrooms. This article draws on qualitative data from a multilingual, rural, fourth-grade classroom in Kenya to interrogate the articulated ideologies and their effects on communicative practices as voiced by the participants and by observing actual classroom practices. Bourdieu's notions of habitus, legitimate language, and symbolic power serve as analytic lenses for enhancing our understanding of the power of language ideologies. From the data, "monoglossia" emerged as the key operating ideology, with time-on-task pedagogical practice helping to consolidate these monoglossic practices. The most visible effect of this ideology was silencing student engagement in the classroom. I argue that an awareness of these articulated ideologies and their observable effects on students' learning and language-use behaviors is important for challenging the subordination of home languages and the epistemic exclusion of the children who speak marginalized languages. Ideological awareness may open spaces for alternative and inclusive educational approaches.

Keywords: Language ideology, monolingual habitus, legitimate language, epistemic exclusion, Bourdieu

Introduction

Kenya is a multilingual, East African country that attained independence from British rule in 1963. Approximately 67 live languages are spoken in Kenya (Lewis, Simons, and Fenngi 2015), with English and Kiswahili as official languages, the latter being also the national language and the language of wider communication (Constitution of Kenya 2010). English acquired a dominant role through British colonization and has been the language of instruction (LOI) from fourth-grade onwards since independence. The current language-in-education policy in Kenya requires support for home languages in grades K–3. As such, transitional bilingual education early-exit (TBE early-exit) is the official education program by default. TBE programs target students who speak the same native language (L1) with a goal to transition the students to an English-only classroom as quickly as possible (after two to three years).

Despite several amendments to the Kenyan Constitution (2010) asserting the value of the country's multiplicity of languages, these values have little influenced language in education practice. The issue came to a head in 2012, when the Ministry of Education's Sessional Paper No. 14 (Republic of Kenya 2012) explicitly required K–3 educators to use student indigenous languages as LOIs, while gradually scaffolding English and Kiswahili. This paper was widely resisted by educators and parents alike (Kiplang'at 2014, 27 January). This resistance simply formalized what researchers had already previously observed; that despite calling for early indigenous language instruction, some school sites implemented English-only instruction beginning from kindergarten (Muthwii 2004; Ogechi 2009).

Muthwii (2004) frames this dominant/English-only language practice as a continuation of postcolonial policy, one that advantages Kenyans who acquire English and thus serves to generate linguistic hierarchies and preferences in the country. For instance, analyzing the perceptions of parents, pupils, and teachers among the Kalenjin in Kenya, Muthwii (2004) found that both pupils and parents alike preferred English at school, not because it afforded greater conceptualization or understanding, but because of the advantages that fluency in it afforded for future participation in national projects, higher education, jobs, and fitting into the wider Kenyan or international community. Conversely, Muthwii (2004) argued that Kenya's language policy faced a great challenge because English literacy provided a symbol of

intelligence and “success,” with the lack of it carrying a stigma of stupidity and failure, even for those with local language fluency.

In the capital, Nairobi, Fink (2005) similarly observed youths abandoning their mother tongue (MT) in favor of English for communication and self-expression. Bunyi (2001) had earlier investigated the process of social reproduction through language and education in post-colonial Kenya and observed that the use of English as the LOI was simultaneously advantageous to those groups of children in cities who had access to linguistic and economic resources and disadvantageous to the majority of the children in rural areas. In this way, English LOI contributed to the perpetuation of social inequalities. Only 25% of Kenyans live in urban areas (United Nations 2014), with the remaining rural majority having unequal access to resources, literacy, and English. Bunyi (2001) and Michieka (2011) have reported LOI as the major social stratifier in Kenya.

Several scholars have drawn on social theories of language to understand educational inequality in multilingual settings across the globe (Hornberger 2005; Lin 2001; Martin-Jones and Heller 1996a, 1996b). Other scholars have demonstrated the different ways that language use affects participation patterns (Heller 1999; Lin 1996, 2001; Weber 2008). As an exercise of power (Bourdieu 1991; Bourdieu and Passeron 1990; Foucault 1977), the classroom becomes a key site for the construction of unequal relations of power, where some languages are deemed more legitimate than others and granted more authoritative value than others.

Lin (1996), studying codeswitching in Hong-Kong secondary schools, found that both students and teachers struggled to acquire English due to its social-economic value and that codeswitching emerged as a strategy for negotiating language power – a response to symbolic domination where a small percentage had access to English’s symbolic social capital while excluding the masses. A study by Heller (1999) of French minority education in Ontario, Canada expanded the notion of legitimate language to include language choice and use in order to examine the role of language in multilingual settings. Heller (1999) demonstrated how turn-taking can become a means not only for control and reinforcement of the teacher’s authority and the legitimation or de-legitimation of languages but also for the advancement or suppression of different group interests. Similar observations are made in Martin-Jones and Saxena (2001).

In Africa, language policies and practices are cited as playing a key role in reinforcing and re-enforcing linguistic hierarchies around the inferiority of continental languages generally (Alexander 2007; Djité 2008). English-only instruction and monoglossic language policies have yielded relatively lower educational achievement for rural students, in part because they rarely have an opportunity to use English outside of the classroom (Brock-Utne 2001; Muthwii 2004). Studies in several multilingual settings have shown similar deficit ideologies towards multilingual learners and their home languages (see, for example, Heller 1999; Lin 1996; Makoe and McKinney 2014; McKinney et al. 2015; Smith 2001).

To date, research related to educational language ideologies in Kenya has tended to focus on the themes of language preferences, school adherence to government language policies, and the role of language in the social reproduction of values (Bunyi 2001; Fink 2005; Jones 2008; Muthwii 2004). In examining reasons for the preference for certain languages, studies of the actual articulated ideologies and manifestations of these ideologies in Kenyan rural classrooms afford an area for research to develop an understanding of this ongoing denigration of local languages. Moreover, Nuñez and Espinoza (2017) have noted that teachers' decisions are influenced by ideologies. Haukås (2016) similarly argued that teachers' beliefs strongly influence their pedagogical decisions. Uncovering ideologies that are enacted through classroom practices would therefore help in training teachers to see the relationship between their language practices and the language ideologies embedded in those practices. Insights gleaned from understanding practiced classroom ideologies will go a long way toward challenging the unequal positioning of languages and consequent linguistic and epistemic inequalities imposed on all educational stakeholders (principals, teachers, parents, and students alike). In this way, the present study adds to those studies that demonstrate how language represents not simply a means for communication but also an exercise of power (Bourdieu 1991; Lin 1996, 2001). As Shohamy (2006) observed, language policies are powerful tools for achieving certain political goals and for legitimizing ideological choices; they not only guide language practices *within* the borders of nation-states but also frame the national and official languages used outside of nation-states for international communication.

The present case study is an extension of studies on language ideologies in Kenyan classrooms. It interrogates the assumptions behind instructional language practices in a Kenyan rural classroom by asking: (a) What language ideologies govern communicative practices in a rural classroom, and (b) How do those ideologies manifest in the communicative lives of learners?

Language ideologies

Language ideologies describe a “set of beliefs about language articulated by users as a rationalization or justification of perceived language structure and use” (Silverstein 1979, 193). Kroskrity (2004) defines language ideologies as “beliefs or feelings about languages as used in their social worlds” (498), adding that multiple ideologies can be articulated and/or embodied in a given practice. Generally, language ideology is entrenched in, and/or reactive to, the experiences of a given social position (Heath 1989; Irvine 1989). These views echo Bakhtin (1981), who asserted that an utterance is always embedded within a history of expressions by others along a chain of ongoing cultural and political moments.

Ideologies, then, are inextricably situated within specific historical and sociopolitical contexts. Bourdieu and Passeron (1990) asserted that the production and reproduction of power and inequality are legitimized through ideologies of language and accomplished via local social discursive practices in specific historical contexts. Studies carried out in different socio-historical contexts have shown the role of language in education for social reproduction, for exclusion or inclusion in knowledge production, and for shaping how participants contribute either to furthering social reproduction or contesting it (Asker and Martin-Jones 2013; Heller 1999; Martin-Jones and Heller 1996a, 1996b). Knowledge construction especially is influenced by the prevailing language ideologies (Martin-Jones and Heller 1996a); whether oriented toward monolingual knowledge or not, affirmation of linguistic legitimacy and authority emerges through language-use patterns.

As a key site of social reproduction and power (Bourdieu 1991; Bourdieu and Passeron 1990; Bunyi 2001), classrooms afford a place and time where language ideologies critically shape the discourse and

practices of educational stakeholders. While education is the socialization of the young into the norms of the society (Oloo 2016), it also presents a microcosm of the wider society, where social and cultural inequities are perpetuated, if not created (Fairclough 1989). English literacy policies and practices in Kenyan classrooms then – as one part of educational discourse more generally – necessarily reflect the premises and beliefs of the prevailing language ideology. To interrogate these premises and beliefs, Bourdieu's (1991) lens of *habitus*, legitimate language, and symbolic power are employed to disclose these premises and beliefs more clearly and to point to ways to redress or resist the wider social and cultural inequity construction that classrooms help to perpetuate and/or create.

Theoretical framework

Habitus

Bourdieu (1991) observes that language is a social-historical phenomenon wherein linguistic exchanges also express relation of power. His concept of *habitus* then represents “a set of dispositions which incline agents to act and react in certain ways” (Bourdieu 1991, 12). This set of dispositions generates practices, perceptions, and attitudes acquired gradually through an inculcation or socialization not necessarily overseen by a rule. Embodied as an interaction of the social world, *habitus* is not composed of solely mental attitudes and perceptions (Reay 2004), but represents a complex interplay between past and present by which dispositions are structured, durable, and able to last through the life-history of an individual. In this way, dispositions are generative and capable of producing a multiplicity of practices and perceptions in fields outside of where they were originally acquired (Reay 2004). *Habitus*, then, enables observable regularities or stabilities of practice and thus bears directly on social reproduction (Hanks 2005). It outlines not only ways of acting but also perceptions governing individual actions. As such, the set of dispositions to use language(s) in certain, usually unexamined or unconscious, ways – especially around language-use evaluations based on socially instilled values – constitutes a *habitus* (Hanks 2005).

One such set is the *monolingual habitus*, which frames only one given language as legitimate and tends to blind people to multilingual, multicultural life (Gogolin 1997). Describing this in terms of Bakhtin's monoglossia – or single-voicedness, Bruhn and Lundquist (2001) connect a monolingual habitus to the situation “where a homogeneous, conventional, ‘correct’ language dominates a culture” (29). Not, however, as the only language: “The central characteristic of monoglossia is [its] hierarchizing tendency, which puts on a monolithic lid on the [heteroglossia in the world] and prevents it from developing” (29).

As a practice of monologism – e.g. an ideological legitimization of only one language – a monolingual habitus secures the ground for “language as a problem” (Ruiz 1984), whereby non-competence in the legitimated language, as well as competence in non-legitimated languages, is framed as socially disadvantageous. Moreover, through standardization, monologism suppresses or stigmatizes language variants and becomes universalizing and homogenizing (Bourdieu 1991). And, since words are loaded with unequal power structures depending who, where, and how they are spoken (Bakhtin 1981; Bourdieu 1991), this linguistic homogenization and standardization is advantageous for those with access to power, disadvantageous for those without access, and thus becomes a basis, if not the means, for reproducing class distinctions like upper and lower, or rural and urban.

Legitimate language

Standardization in particular sets the ground for evaluating languages as *legitimated*. “Legitimated” and “legitimate” are used interchangeably in this paper but always keeping in mind that any “legitimate” language has been made so (legitimated) by someone. While discourse generally accords legitimacy only to certain given ways of speaking or writing through recognition by other producers of language, by the dominant class, and by mass audiences (Bourdieu 1993), the language used for education is especially key, since it becomes legitimated, receives recognition, and comes to serve as the measure by which other languages or variants of language are evaluated. As such, while failures to align with legitimated languages may arise due to inability or inadequate access to them, such nonalignment serves as a sign of failure in general. From this failure, many negative social consequences

follow (Hanks 2005) or are anxiously perceived as following inevitably (Makoe and McKinney 2014; McKinney et al. 2015; Muthwii 2004; Smith 2001).

Symbolic power

The symbolic power of language affords an even limited proficiency in legitimated languages more social capital than proficiency in non-legitimated languages (Bourdieu 1991). Symbolic power is the “invisible power which can be exercised only with complicity of those who do not want to know that they are subject to it, or even that they themselves exercise it” (Bourdieu 1991, 164). This complicity lies at the heart of linguistic practice (Hanks 2005) and is explicable in terms of the structural relations between semiotic systems (including language), habitus (including the perspectives it embodies), and the field (where they occur).

Symbolic power entails that those who speak non-standard languages can be (or simply are) effectively excluded. As such, the adoption of a monolingual habitus (even amongst those historically already disempowered) becomes a matter of self-interest, since in principle, it can (though often does not) afford access not only to some degree of access to power but also to a sense of success. As such, the monolingual habitus upholds a dominating system of standards across a broad range of social classes that simultaneously serves to keep those standards in place (Bunyi 2008).

In this paper, I apply Bourdieu’s concepts of habitus, legitimate language, and symbolic power to gain insight into not only the articulated ideologies in a rural classroom but also how those ideologies manifest in educational practices. These insights are important for developing a transformative pedagogy rooted in learners’ realities.

Materials and method

Context

This study took place at the rural Tumaini Primary School (TPS) in Amani county, Eastern province, Kenya (all locations and names anonymized). TPS was selected due to its rural location. Fourth-grade

was selected as it is the transitioning year to English-only instruction. The language policy at TPS was English-only instruction from fourth-grade onwards. Case study methods (Stake 1995, 2000) were employed with an aim to explore and interrogate the complexities and particularities of language ideologies and practices observable in a rural, multilingual classroom at TPS. Stake (1995) writes that case study involves intensive holistic description and analysis of a single entity, phenomenon, or social unit.

Participants and selection

This study comprises part of a six-month ethnographic case study carried out in a fourth-grade rural classroom at TPS. There were a total of 28 students, 16 boys and 12 girls aged between 9 and 12 years. All fluently spoke Kimeru and Kiswahili; a few spoke Kikuyu and Kiluhya at home. For the purposes of this study, Kimeru and Kiswahili were considered home languages; MT designates Kimeru.

Participants for this study were purposively selected, as reflecting the particular features and/or characteristics enabling a detailed exploration of the central phenomenon in question (Bryman 2012). Such sampling was still made as heterogeneous as possible (Bryman 2012), within the boundaries of the defined population, in order to optimize the chances of identifying the full range of factors or features associated with the phenomenon under study (Ritchie et al. 2013). While the school administrators, the classroom teacher, and all of the fourth-grade students and their parents agreed to participate in this study, case study methodology (Stake 1995) was selected for the examination of one fourth-grade English teacher (Mr Jabari), the school principal (Mr Kibwe), and five focal students and their parents. The English teacher was selected because of the pivotal role he played in ensuring that fourth-grade students followed school language policy, both in the classroom and in the school field. Selected student participants reflected the following criteria: students who (1) were performing at different levels in reading and writing (high achievers and low achievers); (2) had both the parent(s) and the student agree to participate; (3) afforded a mix of males and females, and (4) exhibited classroom engagement, i.e. participated in class with the teacher and peers. Partly, these criteria afforded me access to review classwork, make home visits, and conduct interviews. Out of the five parents who

Table 1. Demographic information of the focal students.

Name	Age	Gender	Language(s) spoken at home	Parent's education level
Almasi	11	F	Kimeru, Kiswahili	No formal education
Mosi	12	M	Kimeru, Kiswahili, Kikuyu	No formal education
Adila	9	F	Kimeru, Kiswahili, Kikuyu	Sixth-grade education
Mahiri	10	M	Kiswahili, Kimeru	Secondary education
Fumo	11	M	Kimeru, Kiswahili	Sixth-grade education

participated in this study, only one had secondary education. Two had attained sixth-grade education and two others did not have any formal education. Table 1 summarizes the demographic information of the focal students and their guardians.

The teacher, Mr Jabari, had 28 years of experience teaching English in rural schools. The principal, Mr Kibwe, had 15 years of experience as a language teacher and 5 years as an administrator. Mr Jabari was, however, the key informant in this case study, as the fourth-grade class teacher and English teacher.

Data sources and analysis

The data sources for this paper include observation field notes, 17 open-ended interviews, and audio-recorded classroom interactions during English language arts lessons. Two interviews were conducted with Mr Jabari, two with Mr Kibwe, one each with focal students' parents, and two interviews each with the five focal students. Interviews were 45–60 min long, were audio-recorded, and subsequently transcribed. Teacher interviews were conducted in English; student interviews were conducted in Kiswahili and Kimeru; parent interviews were conducted in Kimeru. Extensive field notes were gathered from daily classroom observations as well, recording both teacher and student language-use behaviors in fourth-grade classroom.

Using thematic data analysis, which “involves discovering, interpreting and reporting patterns and clusters of meaning within the data” (Ritchie et al. 2013, 271), I then worked systematically through the data to identify topics and progressively integrate them into higher order key themes that addressed the overall research questions (Braun and Clarke 2006). Deductive and inductive analysis was performed on the data (Bogdan and Biklen 2007), and then coded and categorized in

order to develop categories and identify emerging themes, specifically around what language ideologies were articulated and how those ideologies manifested in classroom practices. The classroom interaction data discussed in this article are drawn from three specific lessons. The discourse patterns analyzed here were selected as representative of the regular learning activities typically observed during English language arts lessons and emergent in the initial, more holistic analysis.

Researcher's role

I acknowledge that I am not objective in this study. I bring my lived experiences to the research, and these may have shaped my research questions (Denzin and Lincoln 2005). I am a Kenyan-born woman and a native speaker of Kimeru and Kiswahili. In this study, I shared a linguistic and cultural identity with the participants, which positioned me as an insider and may have been advantageous for accessing information from the research participants. As Smith (1998) noted, however, insiders also need to be reflexive and should build research-based support systems. Although I built collegial and professional relationships with the research participants, my knowledge as a teacher trainer, as well as my academic and theoretical knowledge about language and literacy development, has informed my views of pedagogy differently. These complicated my insider status, and positioned me as an outsider.

Findings and discussion

The major themes that emerged from the data analysis are: “Monoglossic ideology: legitimate vs. illegitimate languages,” “time on task,” and “silencing.” These are discussed in detail below.

Monoglossic ideology: legitimate vs. illegitimate languages for learning

Most of the participants expressed a monoglossic ideology that construed MTs and Kiswahili as obstacles both to excellence in English and to socioeconomic mobility. Kiswahili and MTs alike were associated with deficit, with a lack of English proficiency being seen as a

barrier that had to be overcome. The participants' beliefs in this regard complicated language practices at TPS and in the fourth-grade classroom specifically. Below, I explore this monoglossic ideology through analyses of the fourth-grade English teacher's assertions as well as students' and parent's views.

The English teacher, Mr Jabari, acknowledged that MT had a role in enhancing student understanding about concepts taught, but he lamented that Kimeru had contaminated the students' English language. When asked about roles he perceived for home languages, Mr Jabari stated:

Extract 1: The policy here [at this school] allows us to use ... a bit of Kiswahili to help make sure that children understand what you are teaching. So MT and national language plays a great role in assisting children to understand the new language that we are teaching, that is, English. However, there is a challenge, when we give them assignment to write essays or compositions, sometimes they interpret MT into English; and then you find children are finding it hard, they don't write exactly what is supposed to be written because of direct MT interpretation. So ... the two languages *collide* ... even when they are speaking ... and affect their writing and even speaking skills.

Extract 1 highlights contradicting views about the role of home languages as resources or problems. First, it exhibits an affirmation of the school's unwritten policies and acknowledgment that Kiswahili aids instruction, but then the contradiction occurs when Mr Jabari argues that MT and English *collide*. When probed further, Mr Jabari retreated, stating there were no benefits to incorporating MT into the classroom: "*It is a problem. It has no advantage; it does not add any value in the learning of English*" (emphasis in original).

The lack of MT teaching in K-3 at TPS serves as context and background to Mr Jabari's position. Clearly, Mr Jabari held conflicting ideologies on the roles that home languages played in learning. His views on the perceived role of home language in the process of learning a second language were further gleaned when he expressed dismay at the recurrent "eruption" and widespread use of Sheng. Sheng is an unstable code, variably categorized as a creole, pidgin, or Swahili dialect, whose grammar is largely, though not always, based on Kiswahili and has a lexicalized vocabulary sourced from various codes blended with several innovations (Githiora 2002). Mr Jabari elaborated that because students did not have support for their home languages, they

were forming their own code for communication among peers, which he viewed as a challenge for literacy learning and linguistic purism. Obstacles to acquiring a pure and legitimate language for school purposes, therefore, not only included home languages but also other innovative codes that children developed and used to communicate among themselves.

Despite Mr Jabari's qualified acknowledgment that students understood better when home languages were used, he nonetheless still argued for and pushed for English-only. Bourdieu's *habitus* best describes this disposition to choose English-only as a social formation instilled with particular values for educational ends. Bourdieu (1991) noted that in a particular linguistic market, certain products are more valued than others, and that speakers have a duty to learn and know how to produce the highly valued expressions in these markets. However, Bourdieu (1991) notes further that a speaker's competence, similar to linguistic capital, is not distributed evenly within the society. In that sense, those who possess more linguistic capital may be able to better exploit the system of differences to their advantage.

Mr Jabari frames Kimeru, Kiswahili, and Sheng, in terms of collision or interference. As such, in order to do well in school, a perceived language problem (Ruiz 1984) in the multilingual classroom needed to be overcome. However, some of the challenges that Mr Jabari pointed out were beyond school's boundaries, as seen in Extract 2:

Extract 2: First of all is MT interference, spellings, some children can speak very well but they can't write what they are speaking. The other challenge is the home environment. Some parents are illiterate, so kids don't have any practice apart from school. Also, environment, many people around school are not educated, so they interfere with their learning. Some children also lack of interest in English.... They tend to have negative attitude because they don't understand it. Because in school it has more time, seven lessons per week; some students who are slow learners are bored. So to motivate them to like the subject is time-consuming.

Extract 2 shows that the challenges to learning English are viewed in terms of home language interference, by the student's lack of access to English, and by the setting in which learners actually belong. This construes home languages as illegitimate with respect to the process of learning the school language, English. In this situation, legitimacy is accorded to specific forms of language use absent in the community, while problematizing other forms of language use delegitimized

by higher classes of power (Bourdieu 1993). Literacy in the community, then, is seen only in terms of an ability to read and write in English. This view includes parents, who are typically not literate in English themselves and thus precludes them from participating in their children's English education.

Although studies in multilingual classrooms have shown that family involvement and home literacy practices are resources that enhance literacy development among multilingual rural children (Mkhize 2016b; Moll et al. 1992; Smith 2001), here a monolingual habitus frames literacy in home languages as both illegitimate and an interference that leads to linguistic collision (Extract 1). Conversely, Mkhize (2016a, 2016b), studying bilingual fourth-grade children in South Africa, demonstrate how non-school language practices are not inherently poor but rather provide an asset that students can build on to understand their worlds.

Mr Jabari's remark acknowledges asset perspective as well, to the extent that a bit of MT or Kiswahili can help students to understand *concepts* presented. As such, MT, Kiswahili, and Sheng obtain a kind of subordinate legitimacy but only to the extent that they instrumentally advance concept acquisition in English. Mr Jabari's elevated position as a teacher, and his language ideology position in the community, further embodies the kinds of differences in socioeconomic position reproduced by unequal distributions of legitimized language knowledge (Hanks 2005). Through this monolingual habitus, social reproduction and monoglossia (Bourdieu and Passeron 1990; Bunyi 2008) are maintained in this rural setting.

However, the five focal students confirmed Mr Jabari's acknowledgment that MT facilitated comprehension and learning. As one student (Mahiri) described his MT language use:

Extract 3: Kimeru helps me in reading, when I hear something in English, I teach myself. That is, I know the Kimeru version but I do not know the English, I search for it or I ask mum or dad.¹

Mahiri implied that he interpreted what he read in English into Kiswahili or Kimeru to make sense of it. Another student (Mosi) echoed Mahiri's use of home languages to comprehend:

Extract 4: If you are reading a story in the book, you can understand some words in Kimeru or Kiswahili. I interpret in Kimeru to understand.²

Extracts 3 and 4 suggest that, although qualified as a problem at school, MT apparently played a major role in students' comprehension and literacy development as a legitimate thinking tool (Vygotsky 2012).

The hierarchical positioning of languages and the legitimacy of a language's use in different spaces were echoed by parents, who viewed the use of the MT as unhelpful to their children. They considered MT legitimate only at home with English as a prerequisite for participating in today's world. Parents maintained the importance of English not only for examinations but also as the favored language of communication across nations. In this regard, Mr Jabari stressed that part of his emphasis in English-only was due to parental demands:

Extract 5: If [parents] know there is a teacher who speaks to [students] in Kimeru, and children report this at home, [the parents] are not happy. They like hearing their children speaking English. Even at home they complain that their children are not speaking English properly.... They like their children to do better in English. They complain, "My child has not done very well in English" [and] come and inquire from the class teachers. They like their children to know English so much.... More than other languages, they know that whoever speaks English is a learned person.

Extract 5 underscores the symbolic power of English and the dispositions that parents held concerning English in a context where languages are socially stratified. Parents' views concerning the use of English-only in the classroom echoed Mr Jabari's assertions. Fumo's mother professed:

Extract 6: ... in today's world you have got to know English. Kimeru even if you know Kimeru taught by your parents, it cannot guide you. *Now English is everything.* It guides you to communicate with people from other tribes. And even at work, the work that you will be employed, you will be required to use English. And when out of your parent's home, when you grow up, that is the language you are supposed to use more often/commonly because you are with learned people. You have to show that you are also a grown and a learned person (emphasis in original).³

Extracts 6 alludes to a sociolinguistic stratification, with English construed not only as "everything" but also the marker of an adult and a learned person. The other four parents similarly supported the relegation of Kimeru and Kiswahili to the home and wanted their children to be taught English in order to do well in school and in the global world. Mama Almasi summarizes the parental view of the issue, saying, "The

position of Kimeru is only here at home, it has no place elsewhere in education.”⁴ In this sense, the power-structure of adults (i.e. the English teacher and the parents) articulated a monolingual language ideology marking English as the only legitimate language for education at school, with other MTs as illegitimate in school settings.

The powerful discourse and ideology that having English literacy meant being bright and learned infiltrated students’ views too. Although students acknowledged the legitimate role of home languages as thinking tools for learning, they also equated success in education and in life with mastery of English. They articulated an understanding of English as the best language. Almasi describes the uselessness of reading in Kimeru:

Except 7: I am not happy reading Kimeru. That is difficult. We had a small Kimeru book. I told my mother I couldn’t answer even a single question in it. Now my mother asked, where are we going to take it? And used it to light a fire.... Even her, she does not want me to read Kimeru. Because there is no Kimeru exam that will come, I say, I have written Kimeru exam and passed. I cannot even pass. I have never written in Kimeru. When the teacher tells us to write, I usually get my English book.⁵

Extract 7 illustrates the inculcated monolingual habitus, where an assumption that knowledge is only held in a particular language of social power takes the symbolically extreme form of violence and domination that makes a Kimeru book suitable only for lighting a fire. Another student (Mahiri) projected the language hierarchies and the lack of incentive to achieve Kimeru literacy in Extracts 8a and 8b:

Extract 8a: I like Kiswahili more than Kimeru because there is no testing in Kimeru. We will be tested in Kiswahili or English. I view English as better than all others.

Researcher: Why?

Extract 8b: English; because it is a good language. I view English as a better language than other languages.⁶

Overall, this powerful monoglossic ideology about knowledge that English is “everything” in education most succinctly showed up in the data presented above. The legitimacy of English is acknowledged by all of the participants in fourth-grade classroom.

The downside of the articulated and practiced ideological stance is that it has a potential not only to hinder appreciation of funds of

knowledge in educational practices and lead to epistemic exclusion but also poorer English language outcomes. Nonetheless, this monoglossic disposition regulated educational practices: they were internalized and articulated in the sense that those who did not do well in English were excluded from the discourse of being seen as intelligent.

These findings align not only with scholars who argue that African educators and the education system continue to struggle with symbolic violence and the many legacies of colonialism (Bamgboṣe 2000; Bunyi 2001), but also who document the power of ideologies for reinforcing socioeconomic hierarchies (Alexander 2007; Asker and Martin-Jones 2013; Djité 2008; Heller 1999; Lin 1996, 2001; Makoe and McKinney 2014; Martin-Jones and Heller 1996a; McKinney et al. 2015). In the present study, when a monolingual habitus takes precedence over the multilingual realities of Kenyans, community languages that might otherwise serve as a resource or vehicle for expressing culture, voice, and identity instead are illegitimatized at school, transforming an asset into a liability.

As Blommaert (2006) noted, language stratification comes laden with power relations, ideology, and privileges. As such, obtaining linguistic and literary abilities becomes a means for people not only to establish a social place for themselves but also for others to judge them (Ball and Freedman 2004; Bourdieu 1991; Hall, Vitanova, and Marchenkova 2005). The choices that learners and teachers made regarding the languages to use and promote at school were influenced partly by the prevailing language ideologies. Students, teachers, and parents alike rehearsed the claim that financial gains follow from English literacy. Inasmuch as family involvement has been shown to have a major impact on children's literacy attainment and educational outcomes (Oloo 2016), the separation of MT literacy in the home and privileging of English language at school could impede family involvement in education. This is because MT-literate family members are likely to be less involved in required non-MT school literacy curricula (see, for example, Mr Jabari's comments in Extract 2). Moreover, other factors besides literacy, such as tenacity, motivation, and perseverance (Heckman 2006), can play critical roles in economic and social mobility.

These articulated and practiced English-only language ideologies lead to stigmatizations of indigenous languages and false reifications of what should be considered knowledge. For Almasi's mother (Extract 7), what constitutes a book was only an *English* book; a Kimeru

“book” was suitable only for kindling, a strongly symbolic manifestation of cultural annihilation. It becomes crucial for education stakeholders to understand the consequences of such ideologies at the back of their classroom practices. To become aware of the issue is the first requisite for affording educators the chance to challenge any prevailing monolingual habitus and thus to reach the educational goal of actually *teaching* the multilingual learner.

Time on task orientation

A *time-on-task orientation* (Rossell and Baker 1996) formally assumes that the greater the duration students spend using a language, including its use to engage with subject matter, then the greater their mastery of it becomes. This assumption partially motivated the contra-national educational policy at TPS, which introduces English-only prior to fourth grade. Specifically, Mr Jabari and the principal argued for English-only no later than second grade, emphasizing that this was the practice embraced by private schools in Kenya. Mr Jabari further insisted that earlier introduction would allow students to grow with the language and have a less negative attitude toward it. This was a pedagogical belief that helped to consolidate the monoglossic ideological practices above.

However, observations in the classroom suggested that English reading lessons were not comprehensible to students, regardless of the time spent. Students responded to instructions either with rote repetition of the teacher’s words or with silence. Below is an example of classroom interaction during an English Language arts vocabulary lesson about people in the community that showcases the rote repetition characteristic of many other lessons.

T: Let’s turn to page 145. Question one, can someone read?

S1: [reading] A person who moves from one place to another is called a nomad.

T: Everybody?

S-all: A person who moves from one place to another is called a nomad.

T: Number two?

S2: A group of people living in an area is called a community.

T: Everybody, let’s go!

S-all: [students repeat the sentence together loudly] A group of people living in an area is called a community

S-all: A place where sick people go to be treated is called a dispensary.

T: Again!

A review of focal students' assignments indicated that they could not answer similar questions correctly. During interviews, students frankly avowed their lack of English comprehension. Although the principal and Mr Jabari alike advanced this early-exposure and time-on-task orientation as a practice that yielded better scores on standardized national examinations amongst urban/private-school students, this did not take into account the socioeconomic differences between the rural and urban settings, particularly the distribution of greater linguistic, economic, and cultural social capital available in daily life outside of school (Bourdieu 1991) to explain these differences (Bunyi 2008). The power of time-on-task orientation masked the potential for using home languages and colluded with the monoglossic language ideology belief that MTs interfere with English language acquisition. Adherence to time-on-task practice led to silence in the fourth-grade classroom.

Silencing/exclusion: monolingual habitus in practice

Though they (students) do understand more when something (content) is put in their MT, here in school we don't encourage that one (MT). If we encourage that one, they can give you very correct answers. But we discourage that one, we discourage it!

Field notes, 11 November 2014

The above explores this paper's first research question (What language ideologies are articulated in one rural, fourth-grade classroom?). Here, the second question is addressed: "What are the effects of those language ideologies on communicative practices in a rural fourth-grade classroom?" In general, the main effect of monolingual habitus as the prevailing language ideology in this fourth-grade classroom is silencing. Thus, silencing, as well as rote repetition of teacher statements, excluded students from meaningful engagement in the process of knowledge production. The following, Excerpt 1, drawn from a teacher/ student interaction during English languages arts lesson, illustrates this epistemic exclusion:

- (1) **Teacher:** What are adverbs? [Silence] What are adverbs? [Silence]
What are adverbs? Yes? Yes, Nuru!
- (2) **Nuru:** [Reading in English from the textbook, but the definition of an adverb is not directly stated but implied through examples]. Eeh, it is a...it is a...why...

- (3) **Teacher:** [Intervening without defining the adverb and writing the sentence “Michubu nodded slowly” on the board]. Ok. Look at this sentence. Who can show me adverb in this sentence! Michubu nodded slowly.
- (4) **Student (immediately):** Slowly.
- (5) **Teacher:** Very good! Can you repeat the sentence?
- (6) **A few students:** Michubu nodded slowly.
- (7) **Teacher:** Again!
- (8) **All students:** Michubu nodded slowly.
- (9) **Teacher:** So, the word “slowly” tells us how the nodding was done. Adverbs tell more about the action; how the nodding was done. When do we nod? [Prolonged silence]
- (10) **Student (shouting):** *Hatujui!* (We do not know!)

Of note here, students remained silent when asked to define adverbs (line 1), but one student gave an immediate response (line 4) to the teacher’s question (line 3) after the teacher *spoke* the written sentence aloud. This may be a consequence of correct contextual inference by the student and prompting by the teacher rather than comprehension. Thus, when asked the comprehension question, “When do we nod?” (line 9), only after a prolonged silence does one student, speaking for everyone in Kiswahili, note, “We do not know!” This, despite an apparent comprehension signaled first by only a few students and then all of them by repeating *Michibu nodded slowly*.

Much of the teacher’s work in the classroom involved eliciting rote repetition from the students, particularly around vocabulary. Feedback would include re-repetition of phrases and reinforcing or correcting pronunciation. Moreover, students were limited to exact repetition, and that exact reproduction of the teacher’s sentences constituted the only legitimate responses. Whatever students might otherwise have said, all of those other possibilities were suppressed, silenced, de-legitimated in spite of the apparently outward responsiveness to the teacher’s statements. This belies the hierarchizing tendency of monoglossia (Bruhn and Lundquist 2001), which knows that other languages exist but forestalls them. Nonetheless, the students attempted to engage in learning and knowledge production, even if it ultimately devolved to sheer guesswork.

Excerpt 2 – from another grammar lesson on adverbs – exemplifies how student misunderstanding arises from the classroom’s monolingual habitus and leads to epistemic exclusion.

- (1) **Teacher:** Today we are learning about adverbs of reason. Say, adverbs of reason!
- (2) **Students (All):** Adverbs of reason.
- (3) **Teacher:** [Writing the sentence “A teacher is better than a farmer” on the chalkboard] *A teacher is better than a farmer*. Have you ever held a debate like this? You would say a teacher is better than a farmer *because*...The word *because* is an adverb of reason. *Because* is one example of adverbs of reason. [Silence] Let’s turn our books on page 153. [Writing the sentence “The judge jailed him for ten years because he was guilty” on the board]
- (4) **Student:** *Tuandike?* (Can we write?)
- (5) **Teacher:** [Ignoring the question] Look at this sentence. Can you read that sentence everybody?
- (6) **Students (All):** *The judge jailed him for ten years because he was guilty.*
- (7) **Teacher:** Who will show us adverb of reason in this sentence?
- (8) **One student:** *Jailed.*
- (9) **Another student:** *Judge.*
- (10) **Teacher:** Really?
- (11) **Students (A few):** Yes!
- (12) **Another student:** *Guilty.*
- (13) **Another student:** Yes? Yes?
- (14) **Another student:** *Because* [The correct answer but other students continue to raise their hands and call on the teacher for an opportunity to show, to try out.]

In Excerpt 2, the students’ emerging proficiency in the legitimate language affected their understanding of the content, and hence their participation seemed like guesswork. Students are introduced to the concept of an adverb of reason, through an example. When the teacher writes a sentence on the chalkboard, a student asks, line 14, whether they should write. In line 16, a sentence that has the word *because* as an adverb is presented to students to identify an adverb of reason. Lines 18–24 show that students are making guesses.

Of note here is the enthusiastic engagement of the students, when the free-for-all of guesswork seems to open a possibility for participation by everyone, even after the correct answer has been called out. Thus, despite the silences and rote repetitions, there remains a desire in the students to participate in knowledge generation despite a prevailing epistemic exclusion through the classroom’s monolingual habitus. Monolingual habitus is also signaled here particularly in the teacher’s disregard of one student’s request to participate, line

14 (Can we write?) in Kiswahili. This is exercise of linguistic authority (Bourdieu 1991) – informed arguably by well-intentioned English-only emphases.

Besides the formulaic and rote learning patterns that were observed above in fourth-grade classroom, classroom posters pushed an all-English agenda, saying, “Speak English Only.” This exhortation mirrored school policy and, in part due to MT censorship. Very often, students appeared to remain silent in order to avoid an anticipated punishment attendant upon MT use.

In addition to an epistemic exclusion deployed in the classroom, other methods further reinforced English language use. Around the school, while posters pushed the all-English agenda – declaring, “Speak English Only” – sanctions could be imposed for non-English language use. The most visible of these sanctions was having to wear a dry bone around one’s neck as a punishment, but group policing and informing to authorities occurred amongst the students as well. The rationale given by the English teacher for this was to encourage more English time-on-task, but he admitted also that “slow learners will take it as a *monster*.” Importantly, no empirical evidence or process of documentation and tracking actually linked these monitors to improved proficiency in English language. Use of monitors did, however, suppress MT languages as part of the school’s stated goal, to act like a private school by providing students with opportunities to use and access a legitimated language in education that affords access to economic, social mobility and power. In this process, those who could not speak English were excluded from meaning-making practices.

While students were aware of the power of English and were interested in learning it, the coercive power and punishment attached to speaking other languages complicated classroom practices. From my observations, students primarily used MTs (along with Sheng) in their everyday lives. English words were rarely used and, when they were, only in a limited code-mixing context with Kimeru or Kiswahili. The increased surveillance by classroom teachers – used to optimize the effects of the monitors – created a tense, authoritative, and fear-based atmosphere in the school between teachers and students.

Principal Kibwe expressed awareness that the monitors had the power to silence children, but maintained the opinion that such monitoring facilitated student English use. Mr Kibwe cited the role of ridicule in his statement that: “If a student does not pronounce an English

word correctly or makes a grammatical error, other students would laugh at her. This makes the student to try her best to improve her English and not repeat the mistake.” But the principal also admitted that “ridicule has unintended consequences. It limits the students and also ... also brings intimidation ... so it can have its damages too.” However, Mr Kibwe posited that the monitors’ benefits exceeded their disadvantage, if only by improving the school’s general soundscape. As he stated, “Monitors work! Besides being a motivation for the students to work on their English language skills, they also minimize the noise in the school. Because if a student speaks in language other than English, she will be punished. So, there is less noise in class.” Silence was viewed by the school principal as desirable in the school, the silence generated by an English-only ideology.

Unsurprisingly, students resented being monitored. Mosi, for example, narrated the humiliation students felt because of the school’s language-use policy involving monitors:

Extract 9: In class four we have a bone monitor. A person was wearing a bone. A person was not wanting to speak in Kimeru to avert wearing it. It smelled. We were brought another one this term, I don’t know where it is. If a person speaks in Kimeru, you are beaten.⁷

All of the student participants echoed Mosi’s feeling of humiliation in Extract 9 and noted that they strived to remain silent to avoid the monitor. This silencing excluded students from contributing their knowledge in English-only lessons. Through censorship, symbolic violence occurred at the nexus where student indigenous language and student identity itself were silenced.

Bourdieu (1997), in his discussion of the historicity of reason, argued that reason is not legitimized by reason itself but by conventions that are received and linked to power and pageantry. In this classroom, students show their loyalty and obedience to the symbolic power and pageantry of the milieu by curtailing their speech. As such, symbolic violence dominates and reinforces, even creates, differences of power in the classroom by simultaneously including a legitimated language while excluding or silencing students’ voices. Through a filter of educational policy, then, this structural power is masked; the process by which legitimated language sanctions certain ways of speaking and rewards some while silencing others (Hanks 2005) covers a deeper, potentially unintended, operation of power.

In the fourth-grade classroom studied, the most observable impact of monolingual ideology in fourth-grade classroom was silence, followed by an epistemic exclusion whereby learners were often mere recipients of information from the teacher. The LOI was distanced from the learners, and both the teacher and the learners were constrained by external rules and requirements in a way that seemed to make them simply passive recipients and practitioners of an authoritative discourse, draped under a popular discourse around economic gains claimed on behalf of English literacy. Graham (2010) has similarly observed that the pedagogic use of exogenous languages distanced education from African culture; Jagusah (2001) has lamented a lack of consciousness about the African self and a critical awareness of the other in the educational process.

English-only, exam-focused language ideologies in Kenya have led to rote learning that lacks or precludes learner meaning-construction and leads to extensive silencing and the exclusion of students from participation (Ackers and Hardman 2001; Kiramba 2017a; Ogechi 2009; Pontefract and Hardman 2005). These factors exacerbate epistemic exclusion and dropout rates alike (Alidou 2003; Bamgboşe 2000; Qorro 2009) among students whose MT is different from the LOI. Consequently, illiteracy within Kenya's population remains high, especially in rural areas, with both economic and sociopolitical costs that negatively affect even the national elite (Bunyi 2008).

Bourdieu (1991) diagnosed how social hierarchies of power are reflected in, and simultaneously reinforced by, the status of the languages of different groups who live within that society. Thus, those who are in possession of the dominant language are apt to maintain their symbolic dominance, whereas speakers of secondary, minority, or local languages are symbolically silenced (Lippi-Green 1997). The findings of this study echo this diagnosis. While the ideological stance of educational stakeholders and the language policy and practice in the rural TPS fourth-grade classroom denied students epistemic access, they contribute also to the reproduction of social and educational inequality between the rural poor and other relatively more economically advantaged peers in urban and rural areas, especially those with access to English language resources outside of school settings. As such, the alienation of these fourth-grade learners both from their locally rich cultures and languages and also participation

in knowledge construction at school is problematic in both economic and social terms simultaneously.

Conclusion and recommendation

This is a case study of one fourth-grade classroom. Study participants included one teacher, one school principal, twenty-eight students and their parents. This is because the study was intended to elicit an understanding of one case rather than as a generalization. Data in this study demonstrate widespread acceptance of, and at times arguments for, an English-only language ideology among all of the educational stakeholder-participants at one rural school. Educational administrators, perhaps out of their own history of education and subsequent sense of success, elaborately emphasized time-on-task arguments aimed to improve performance in national examinations. Parents indicated their embrace of an English-only language ideology as the best, or perhaps the only, available means for attaining academic and social success in their children, measured in terms of better performance in standardized exams and an anticipated economic and social mobility. Learners embraced the language ideology much as their parents did – out of a hopefulness for what it promises economically and socially in the future. The most immediate and visible effect of this monoglossic language ideology was a silencing and epistemic exclusion of learners from knowledge production in the classroom.

From this understanding of the language ideologies entrenched in literacy practices and the resulting epistemic exclusion for multilingual rural children, I recommend the following:

First, an informational campaign is needed to help all education stakeholders recognize multilingualism as a form of capital (Smith and Murillo 2015) that benefits, rather than hinders, a student's affective, cognitive, social, intercultural, academic, and economic achievement. It has been established that leveraging multilingual resources mediates student participation and enables the kind of self-authoring around lived realities that connects the classroom to the world and fosters learning (Kiramba 2016, 2017b; Vygotsky 2012). Mkhize (2016a) demonstrated how inclusion of students' everyday discursive practices enabled epistemic access and supported complex learner identities in

a South African rural classroom. Relatedly, Kioko, Ndungu, Njoroge, and Mutiga (2014) have called for more inclusion of MT success stories in educational discourse in order to dispel prejudicial attitudes about African languages. These studies, among others, suggest a need for opening up multilingual spaces in classrooms for epistemic access and effective learning. They also point to a need to include applied linguistics as part of teacher preparation curricula in Kenya.

Second, economically and ethically, home languages should be seen both as a legitimate resource and a right, not a problem (Ruiz 1984). To recognize local languages as valuable resources both in themselves and as facilitators for current global languages discloses this cultural resource as an asset, not a liability. As such, even parents who are not literate in English can support their children through everyday home literacy practices, while students can tap from their cultures, knowledge systems, and communities that are already coded in home languages. This acknowledgement of home languages has the potential to challenge monolingual ideologies that currently limit learning and exclude multilingual learners from meaningful knowledge production.

Above all, there is a need for research to further demystify and debunk the articulated and practiced sort of monolingual habitus traced in this paper. As a furtherance of a growing body of research, educational specialists in Kenya and other multilingual nations could conduct research to understand how cognitive development is achieved as well as the role of home languages in literacy development. Such research would also provide a basis for exposing the irrationality of neocolonial English-only policies in multilingual nations. At a minimum, it would help to frame pedagogical theories and practices for multilingual learning that better equips teachers in those settings, in order to make and achieve learning as the first priority of education.

Notes

1. Kinanisaidia kusoma, nikisikia kitu kwa Kingereza, najifunza, yaani najua ya Kimeru lakini sijui kwa Kiingereza, natafuta ama nauliza mama au baba.
2. Kama unasoma story imeandikwa kwa kitabu, neno zingine unaweza kuzielewa kwa Kimeru ama Kiswahili. Kuelewa nitainterpret na Kimeru.

3. Ni mbonaga kubugi nontu nthiguru ya nandi no mwanka withirue ukimenyaga Gichungu, Kimeru kinya ukamenya Kimeru aki kiria uritani kia muciaru gitumba kugutongerira, nandi Gichungu nokio mantu yonthe. Kigagutongerira kwariria kinya antu bati ba kabila yenu. Na kinya ngugine, ngugine iria ukaandikwa menya no gichungu ugatumira, na kinyaa...wauma kii aa kwa muciria ugeeta wakura, lugha iu nio ubati gutumira common mono nontu nio, wina antu bathometer. No mwanka withire ukionanagia kinya aku wi muntu ukuri kana muntu uritani.
4. Nafasi ya Kimeru no aa kiri muciaru iri, guti angi iri kii kithomo.
5. Mimi sifurahii kusoma Kimeru. Hiyo ni ngumu. Tulikuwa na kitabu cha Kimeru kidogo. Mii nikamwambia mama yangu siwezi hata kujibu swali hata moja. Sasa mama yangu alisema sasa wapi tutapeleka, akaakisha nayo moto. Kwa ajili hakuna...kwa sababu hata yeye hataki mimi nisome Kimeru. Kwa sababu hakuna mtihani wa Kimeru itakuja, niseme eti nimeandika mtihani wa Kimeru nikapita. Siwezi hata kupita. Mimi sijawahi kuandika kwa Kimeru. Saa ile mwalimu ame-atuambia tuandike natoanga kitabu cha Kiingereza.
6. Mahiri: Napenda Kiswahili kuliko Kimeru because hakuna kuulizwa kwa Kimeru. Tutaulizwa kwa Kiswahili au English. Naona Kiingereza ndio nzuri kuliko zote. Researcher: Kwa nini? Mahiri: Kiingereza; kwa sababu ni lugha nzuri, mimi huona English ikiwa nzuri kuliko lugha zingine.
7. Class four tulikuwa na monitor ya bone. Mtu alikuwa anaweka borne. Mtu hakuwa anataka kuongea Kimeru asivae hiyo. Ilikuwa inanuka. Tukaletewa ingine muhula huu, sijui ilienda wapi. Mtu akiongea Kimeru unachapwa.

Acknowledgments – I thank the anonymous referees for their useful suggestions. I extend my appreciation to James- Alan Oloo and Michael Lopez for reading and providing feedback to several drafts of this paper. All views expressed here are my own.

Disclosure statement – No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

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